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ABSTRACT

Over the past 10 years, traditional elementary history textbooks have been criticized by a number of reviewers. In part as a result, some fifth-grade teachers, many of whom have students who are learning chronological U.S. history for the first time, have begun to augment these textbooks with biographies, historical fiction, literature-based historical accounts, and other alternative history texts, providing multiple sources to their students for learning about that history. A study assessed the history reading opportunities provided in a fifth-grade classroom, and then (1) questioned six students from that class about their reading interests with respect to the various texts; (2) explored how the six distinguished among the texts as sources of historical context; and (3) studied the ways in which the multiple sources influenced the development of their critical reading capacities and historical understanding. Six major themes emerged from the data. These themes are discussed in relationship to their implications for learning to become engaged, critical readers of U.S. history and for what they might say about developing enhanced levels of historical understanding. Contains 38 references, 7 notes, and a figure. A 16-item sample of history texts available to students and think-aloud protocol texts are attached. (Author/RS)

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Reading American History: How do Multiple Text Sources Influence Historical Learning in Fifth Grade?

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Summer 1996

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The National Reading Research Center (NRRC) is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education to conduct research on reading and reading instruction. The NRRC is operated by a consortium of the University of Georgia and the University of Maryland College Park in collaboration with researchers at several institutions nationwide.

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Reading American History: How do Multiple Text Sources Influence Historical Learning in Fifth Grade?

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Abstract. *Over the last 10 years, traditional elementary history textbooks have been roundly criticized by a number of reviewers (e.g., Beck & McKeown, 1991; Beck, McKeown, & Gromoll, 1989; McCabe, 1993; Sewall, 1988; Tyson & Woodward, 1989). In part as a result, some fifth-grade teachers, many of whom have students who are learning chronological American history for the first time, have begun to augment these textbooks with biographies, historical fiction, literature-based historical accounts, and other alternative history texts, providing multiple sources to their students for learning about that history (Tomlinson, Tunnell, & Richgels, 1993). But what influence does the use of multiple sources have on fifth-graders' initial experience learning about American history? This study examined that question by assessing the history reading opportunities provided in one fifth-grade classroom, and then (1) questioning 6 students from that class about their reading interests with respect to the various texts, (2) exploring how the 6 distinguished among the texts as sources of historical content, and (3) studying the ways in which the multiple sources influenced the development of their critical reading capacities and historical understanding. Six major themes emerged from the data. These themes are discussed in relationship to their implications for learning to become engaged, critical readers of American history and for what they might say about developing enhanced levels of historical understanding.*

Introduction

The development of literacy in the subject matter area of history is a complicated matter. It is complicated particularly for intermediate-grade elementary students who, typically in fifth grade for example, encounter their first experience with learning systematic, chronologically organized American history. Becoming historically literate involves the development of historical understanding (e.g., Dickinson & Lee, 1984; Gagnon, 1989; National Center for History in the Schools, 1994). Historical understanding often is described as entailing, among other things, the cultivation of perspective taking with people of the past (e.g., Shemilt, 1984), the ability to situate what is learned in its historical context (e.g., Brophy, VanSledright, & Bredin, 1993), and the skill to read historical accounts for the way

authors construct event depictions, use data sources to build their accounts, and work from particular frames of reference that generate subtexts (e.g., biases toward certain ways of depicting the past) in their written creations (e.g., Greene, 1994; Wineburg, 1991, 1994).

These elements of historical understanding also are congruent with the requirements for developing engaged, self-determining readers outlined by Alvermann and Guthrie (1993) in *Themes and Directions of the National Reading Research Center*. Highly engaged readers of history are motivated to search out historical information, question sources, and construct understandings; knowledgeable about historical concepts and ideas, and where to obtain information about them; and socially interactive and conversant with others in their reading practices.

The development of historical understanding is heavily dependent on written text as a principal means by which learners obtain access to traces of the past. The written text that students typically encounter in fifth grade is the standard, hardcover textbook. But in some fifth-grade classrooms, supplemental texts, including biographies, historical fiction, literature-based accounts, and other alternative history texts have begun to appear with greater frequency (VanSledright & Brophy, 1995).[1] What has motivated this shift? It is difficult to know precisely, but it may have something to do with the growing criticism of standard social studies textbook series.

Textbook History

Over the last 10 years, the standard, encyclopedic textbooks have been roundly criticized for, among other things, their lack of reader considerateness, the use of the omniscient and invisible narrator, their mundane expository style, and the disconnected nature of the events they portray (e.g., Beck & McKeown, 1991; Beck, McKeown, & Gromoll, 1989; McCabe, 1993; Sewall, 1988; Tyson & Woodward, 1989). When young students read them, the sense they make of what they read is often disconnected and decontextualized (Beck, McKeown, & Worthy, 1995; McKeown & Beck, 1994). Many of the standard history textbooks have been pared down to short sentences to meet readability formulas. The words that link aspects of common historical narratives (e.g., and then, because, meanwhile) also are removed to meet these formulas, rendering the texts difficult to understand for young readers. The invisible, passive-voiced author also contributes to reader confusion by giving the impression that the accounts depicted are beyond question and that they are the one, true account of the past.

The Lure of Other Historical Texts

For some fifth-grade teachers, having had to rely on these textbooks as a means of providing students with the principal source of information about history, has proved rather

[1]Primary documents are another form of written text that students might read. However, in work with elementary school teachers and students over a 5-year period, the first author has seldom seen primary documents used in any form. In the classroom sutdy about which this paper reports, primary documents were not used.

dismaying. As a possible result, they have been supplementing (sometimes replacing entirely) the standard textbooks with a rich array of the now widely available alternative history texts (Tomlinson et al., 1993). In contrast to the standard expository textbooks, these alternative texts often take the form of compelling narratives, wherein the authors have used first-person accounts, dramatic representation, and fictionalizing dimensions to engage young readers (see Freeman & Levstik, 1986; McGowan, Erickson, & Neufeld, 1996; Richgels, Tomlinson, & Tunnell, 1993; Tunnell & Ammon, 1996). The authors and publishers of these alternative historical texts have not worried about word counts and readability formulas per se; they have attempted to construct compelling and seductive, yet reasonably accurate history books that can augment the traditional textbook market. The commercial success of these alternative texts has spurred some to construct entirely different types of history series, using the compelling story or narrative as a template. *The History of US* (Hakim, 1993a), a 10-volume, paperback history series written specifically for upper elementary children is one such example.

But what influence do these alternative texts have on young readers' developing historical understanding when used on their own or in concert with textbooks? What learning opportunities do they provide? Do they affect interest in reading history? Do students learn to distinguish different types of historical texts and read them for their varying purposes? When confronting an array of sources, how does this influence the ways in which young readers handle historical evidence, sort out conflicting interpretations, and deal with reliability and validity issues? In short, do multiple sources of historical information enhance the development of critical literacy[2] and broaden historical understanding?

The Influence of Alternative History Texts

At present, the empirical information that addresses these questions is relatively scarce, particularly with regard to young students' experiences with alternative history texts (McGowan et al., 1996). However, in one study (VanSledright & Brophy, 1992), the early indications suggested that some students who read historical fiction accounts regularly, but who were without the benefit of being taught to distinguish between different types of historical texts and possible author purposes and varying frames of reference, conflated the dramatic narrative *form* of the fictional accounts with the *content* of history. In other words, these students tended to think that if historical accounts were dramatic and built around narrative forms, then they were history, without much regard to the accepted evidence-use conventions employed in the historical profession. The conflation of content and form[3] resulted in retellings of the past that were pre-

[2] By critical literacy, we refer here to the fourth tier of Like's (1995, pp. 106–110) reading model in which readers learn to be skeptical and interrogating of the texts they encounter in order to make more astute judgements about what and how they learn, whay they consume, who they believe, how they understand, and so on.

[3] We borrow these terms in this configuration from Hayden White (1987).

sented in convincing fashion and with veracity, but sometimes were wildly imaginative, often bearing virtually no relationship to what historians have generally written about similar events of the past (for examples, see VanSledright & Brophy, 1992).

The "Promise" of Using Multiple Historical Texts

Despite the direction some students took in this earlier study (VanSledright & Brophy, 1992), it is possible that learning history from multiple sources—where textbooks and a wide array of alternative history texts and other sources of information about the past are readily available—may actually enhance critical literacy and amplify historical understanding (see Levstik, 1989; Tunnell & Ammon, 1996). Fifth-graders, for example, might encounter different versions of similar events, producing a level of cognitive dissonance and creating a need to resolve perceived disparities. Or, when searching for information, the sheer weight of it generated from a wide variety of sources could require judgments about significance and reliability in establishing which source(s) would be best to use. In much the way a historian interrogates the evidence as s/he searches for patterns and inconsistencies and constructs different ideas about what might have taken place (event depictions or models), working from multiple sources could promote similar thinking and research-oriented activity. Judging sources of evidence used to support historical assertions, raising questions about the significance of events, assessing quality of arguments, and building their own event depictions could come to dominate the way students encountered the past. In short, encountering multiple sources might help students learn to read more like their expert, historian counterparts.

All of this does not mean, however, that the goal of learning history requires students to become "little historians." The type of work historians do—searching out material, careful critical reading of texts, questioning the significance of evidence, building event depictions or models, assessing source authors' frames of reference and the subtexts they create in a text, judging veracity and reliability of accounts (Seixas, 1993; Wineburg, 1994)—is of a similar sort that we would ask of informed, active citizens in democracies such as our own (Luke, 1995). It therefore would make good sense to teach about history, historians, and the nature of their work explicitly in schools as preparation for this form of life.

This type of learning would most likely signal a marked improvement over that which requires relatively passive acquiescence to the facts found in encyclopedic textbooks (see Sewall, 1988). But, to reiterate, we know very little about whether or not this is what happens in classrooms where books about the past contain content structured in different ways and come in a variety of shapes, covers, sizes, and styles. Our study was designed to explore a classroom in which these multiple text sources were present and actively utilized by young students.

Research Dimensions and Theoretical Frameworks

Because this was an exploratory study, we sought to establish a research context that

would provide a naturalistic entrée into the reading experiences of young learners as they read from a wide range of history texts. Therefore, we purposively chose a fifth-grade classroom taught by a teacher who not only used the textbook, but also supplemented it with an assortment of alternative history texts. This allowed us to assess how the texts were used and to what ends. In turn, this provided us with the context for generating data-collection instruments that we could employ to address the critical reading and historical understanding experiences of students in this classroom.

Attention to these experiences was framed around three dimensions that encompassed our research questions: (Dimension 1) student interest in reading history as influenced by the different texts they encountered, (Dimension 2) student capacity for distinguishing the texts and reading them for their different purposes and uses, and (Dimension 3) the development of critical reading expertise as demonstrated by how students used multiple sources to deal with questions of conflicting interpretations of events, historical evidence (reliability and validity issues), the construction of event depictions or models, and authors' frames of reference and the subtexts (or bias) they create.

Dimension 1: Reading Interest Preferences and Motivation

A portion of the framework for exploring for Dimension 1 was influenced by 5 of the 11 categories in Wigfield and Guthrie's (1995) "Motivations for Reading Questionnaire: Original Version" (i.e., reading efficacy, challenge, curiosity, aesthetics, and social interaction). We used those categories that could be tailored to fit our focus on reading history and also were linked to Dimensions 2 and 3. By using these categories, we hoped to generate profile information about students' reading engagement levels and their interests in historical study. For the other portion of the framework for Dimension 1, we wanted to explore how students made sense of which of the many text sources they used were most valuable for accomplishing their classroom tasks, which books they thought they preferred, and why. We hoped to understand more about the nature of what, if anything, interested students about the various books they encountered and about any reading preferences they generated. For both portions of this Dimension of the study, we were assuming that reading interest and preference influenced motivation, which, in turn, affected what and how students learned. However, we were seeking impressionistic and descriptive data, not attempting to test or verify a correlation.

Dimension 2: Distinguishing Texts

For this dimension, we worked from the assumption that having access to multiple texts might raise issues among students about their different types and prose styles (fiction, exposition). We wondered if, through repeated exposure to the different texts, students would learn to read and assess their substance differently, something not done by students in the VanSledright and Brophy (1992) study. As we noted, in this earlier study, several students conflated content with form, causing them to interpret aspects of the past inaccurately. We sought to

explore further the presence (or absence) of this content-form conflation.

Dimension 3: Developing Critical Reading Expertise

The third Dimension occupied most of our attention in this study. Operating on the assumption that historians could be thought of as exemplars of good reading practices, the sort required of democratic citizens, we framed our exploration of students' history reading practices against that done by the experts—historians themselves. Drawing from work done by Greene (1994), Stahl, Hynd, McNish, and Bosquet (in press), and Wineburg (1991, 1994), we constructed a framework that contained the following reading practices engaged in by historians:

1. They recognize that historical texts are *representations of the past* constructed by humans for different purposes. Textual accounts do not necessarily correspond with or map directly onto the past itself. Therefore, historical validity and reliability issues continually affect the creation and consumption of historical texts.
2. They build *event models* based on various accounts of past occurrences as a method to sift, weigh, judge, and corroborate the historical evidence.
3. They practice the act of *sourcing*—that is, they try to locate a text and its perspective within the sweep of other accounts, and with reference to the historical context.
4. They read for *subtext*—that is, they try to understand as much about the author and his or her purposes, biases, and sources of information as they do the event representation itself.

Using this framework, we sought to explore the degree to which we found evidence of these reading practices in the students who, like historians, were reading and attempting to understand the past from multiple text sources.

School and Classroom Setting

In the fifth-grade class where this study took place, students studied American history approximately 3 hr per week for the entire year. Their examination began with a short unit on who historians are and how they go about their work. Following this, students embarked on a series of content-based units that began by looking at pre-Columbian Native American cultures along the Atlantic seaboard of North America. Then came a unit on explorers, which was followed closely by a 6-week unit on colonization. This lead students to the an 8-week study of the American Revolution period and its aftermath. The year ended with consideration of the Civil War period. We entered the setting in the middle of Explorers Unit (early November) and departed at the conclusion of American Revolution Unit (mid April).

There were 26 students in the class. Nineteen were Caucasian, 3 were African American, and 4 were Asian American. Their teacher was Jordan Duckworth.[4] According to their reading achievement scores, students in this class were reading in a range from just below grade level to several grades above. Most, however, were reading approximately on level.

[4] This is a pseudonym as are all the identifying names that follow.

The fifth-grade class was one of three in a comprehensive K–5 elementary school located in a large Maryland school district. Sections of this district are urbanized and draw school populations composed of highly ethnically diverse students, many of whom are recent immigrants. Other geographic sections of the district are more rural, drawing fairly homogenous, generally White populations. A third section of the district is suburbanized. These suburban schools can be characterized by a moderate degree of ethnic diversity. The school in which this study was conducted generally represented the latter type.

During the three units we observed, Duckworth structured classroom activities around "research projects." He asked students to use the variety of texts he had available in the classroom as information sources for their project assignments (see Appendix A for a list of some of the texts students used). For example, in the colonies unit (the one we relied on to draw much of our data), students encountered the growth and development of the British colonies in North America through the process of two research projects. In an effort to trace the chronological development of the colonies from 1607 to 1650, students were clustered into small groups (of 3 to 5 students) and then were asked to choose from a list of colonies Duckworth had prepared, about which they were to do research. For this first project, the goal was to learn as much about these early colonies as possible; write a research report (up to three pages) which detailed the facts of settlement, leaders, economic activity, religious practice, and so forth; and then produce a poster or "advertisement" that attempted "to sell" the colony to potential immigrants. The list of colonies included Jamestown, Plymouth, the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and the early settlements in New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, the Carolinas, and Georgia.

The books that students were able to use in their research included the textbook *The United States, Its History and Its Neighbors* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991; referred to below as UST for United States textbook), and two alternative text series, the relevant volumes of each were *Making Thirteen Colonies* (Hakim, 1993b; MTC below) and *Voices in African American History: The Colonies* (Modern Curriculum Press, 1994). Also available were a series of 13 short hardcover books, one on each of the original thirteen colonies. Students spent a week of class periods doing their research and then made presentations to the rest of the class using the advertisements they had constructed as props. With virtually no exceptions, groups of students chose from among the alternative texts as the sources of information for this project.

For the second research project, research groups (4 to 5 students each) explored the later development of the colonies (1650–1750) by region: northern, middle, and southern, one group per region. Three groups also were assigned to specifically research slavery in the colonies, again by region. The project culminated in a report to the class by each group. Groups used posterboards to present their findings. This project took approximately 2 weeks. The books that students could read to collect information were the same as for the

previous project. However, Duckworth recommended that the students looking at the colonial regions focus their search for information primarily on the textbook. The groups researching slavery were asked to focus on the *Voices in African American History: The Colonies* volume. Although other books (and an encyclopedia set) were available, the students generally followed Duckworth's request. This type of research activity was common across all three units. Only the topics changed as the content shifted. While students worked in groups, Duckworth typically acted as a facilitator, moving about the room, checking on group activity, helping students obtain material, and addressing questions. The culminating presentations for both projects, regardless of the different texts used, typically involved the recitation of the information collected, usually in discrete chunks as though students were reading from an archive of facts or an encyclopedia.

Method

Data Collection Sources and Procedures

We spent almost 6 months in the classroom, making visits 3 days per week during the time in which history was taught. In an effort to understand this setting, we began by observing how Duckworth constructed the history units and how the students experienced his curricular enactments, for example, by sitting in on research groups and watching how they used the history books. We observed and took detailed field notes on three units: (1) Exploration of North America, (2) the Colonization of North America by the English, and (3) the American Revolution. We also held a number of informal conversations with Duckworth to explore what he was planning and how he understood the activities in which he asked students to engage.

To augment our field notes and informal conversations with Duckworth, and to develop profile information about him, he was requested to complete a questionnaire. He was asked questions that dealt with his view of history, the importance he placed on learning about it for his fifth graders, his understanding of how different texts he used enhanced (or not) motivation for reading history, how he thought his students might reconcile the differences in accounts they read, whether he thought the textbooks or the alternative texts contained "better" (i.e., more accurate) history, and his understanding of why the books he used seldom contained references to the sources consulted in creating event depictions. His responses to both formal and informal queries and our classroom observations became the basis from which we constructed most of the data-gathering instruments that were developed to explore the study's three research dimensions.

In order to explore Dimension 1, we constructed an interview protocol that drew from the five categories of the Wigfield and Guthrie (1995) questionnaire. Near the end of the study, we used it to interview 6 students from Duckworth's class.[5] The protocol asked

[5] Duckworth selected the 6 students based largely on our request that they be 3 males and 3 females, represent an array of different reading achievement levels, and mirror, if possible, the ethnic diversity of the class. The 6 students, introduced in the next section, were our principal informants and data sources throughout the study.

students to talk about whether or not they shared what they had read in their history books with other people, what they thought their teacher's purpose was in asking them to read from the different books, their sense of their own reading ability, and several questions about whether or not they liked history books that were challenging to read and made them think. In conjunction with contentbased interviews[6] conducted with the 6 students following the Explorers and Colonies units, we asked students about the different books they had read during each unit, how they felt about them, whether or not they had found particular books more interesting than others, and if so, why.

We relied primarily on these content-based unit interviews to explore Dimensions 2 and 3. Drawing from our field notes and observations on the Explorers and Colonies units, we constructed sets of questions that asked students about what they thought they had learned by conducting research on a particular unit topic; how they went about the research and reporting task; which books they used and why; whether they read those books differently and if so, why; how they handled conflicting information from different sources; where they thought the authors obtained their information; and a subset of questions about which texts they thought were most reliable and valid and why. For these interviews, we selected a variety of texts that were used in the research work, and laid them out for students to refer to as they discussed our questions.

To augment the data we obtained from the interviews and further explore the questions we were asking with respect to research Dimension 3, we employed a think-aloud protocol in connection with the unit on the American Revolution. Students were asked to read two selections on the Boston Massacre, one taken from an alternative history text series students read from in class entitled *From Colonies to Country* (Hakim, 1993c) and the other from a high school history series entitled *Inquiries into American History: The American Revolution* (Cummins & White, 1980). The first account (T1) was a short, third-person rendition (secondary source) by the author of the series, spiced with some invented but plausible quotations. The second text (T2) was a combination of third-person reporting and primary-source, eyewitness accounts (see Appendix B for both accounts). We modified the latter slightly to make it easier for students to read (e.g., some difficult eighteenth-century words were given late twentieth-century synonyms).

Often think aloud protocols are employed to check comprehension and text processing. That was a secondary concern. We were interested in comprehension but only in that we wanted to be reasonably sure students could make sense of what they read primarily because of our interest in what they would do with the differences between the accounts. *From colonies to Country* (Hakim, 1993c) excerpt was short and lacked much detail, contained no primary-source material, and conveyed the idea that the incident happened in one rather infamous day. It also contained the

[6] The term "content-based interviews" refers to those protocols that asked students questions situated within a particular history unit, in this case, Explorers or Colonies.

moralistic stance of the author. *The American Revolution* (Cummins & White, 1980) excerpt provided eyewitness testimony, described how the event began with an innocuous incident and escalated across several days. This account avoided a moralistic position. Such text differences may allow for the examination of the reading skills of detection and critical assessment, how history authors use sources to write history and raise questions about the reliability of those sources, and how evidence is used to ponder and create event models. We wanted to see what students would do with the differences when confronted with them in a particular reading context that allowed us to explore them more closely than by classroom observation.

Students read aloud *From Colonies to Country* version first, then followed with *The American Revolution* text account. This order was intentional: we wanted students to encounter the easier, less-detailed text first as a method of juxtaposing it against the more complex, primary-sourced account to see what differences students would note. After they had completed reading the two accounts aloud, adding in their interspersed commentaries, students were asked by the interviewer (I) to assess the texts: whether they liked one over the other and why, had they noticed differences and if so which ones, about the validity and reliability of the sources, and what they thought of how the authors were conveying the account of the Boston Massacre.

Analyses

Content-based interviews with the 6 students were audiotaped, transcribed verbatim, and later sparsely edited for readability and punctuation clarity. However, care was taken to retain students' actual word usages and syntax. We then explored the transcripts for emergent themes or patterns in the students' responses that would address the questions we were asking within each of the three research dimensions. We began by grouping responses to the questions in the content-based interviews by research dimension. For example, those questions that asked students to talk about their reading preferences, interests, and text choices (Dimension 1) were clustered together and examined for the appearance of preference and interest patterns. The questions that dealt with how students read the different texts and understood their different prose styles (Dimension 2) were also clustered and examined for patterns. The same process was repeated for those Dimension 3 questions dealing with event modeling, use of evidence (validity and reliability), sourcing the texts, and reading for bias or subtext. Responses were analyzed holistically. We were not looking for specific terms, words, or concepts amenable to discrete coding schemes, but rather general themes that would address our research dimensions, a process referred to as analytic induction in hypothesis-generating or qualitative research designs (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Patton, 1990).

This process of examining the content-based interview transcripts for patterns and themes was done by each researcher independently. We then compared the themes we generated. Although we did not always use the same language to describe the themes (e.g., one of us used the term "sourcing" to describe the ways students did or did not attend to how

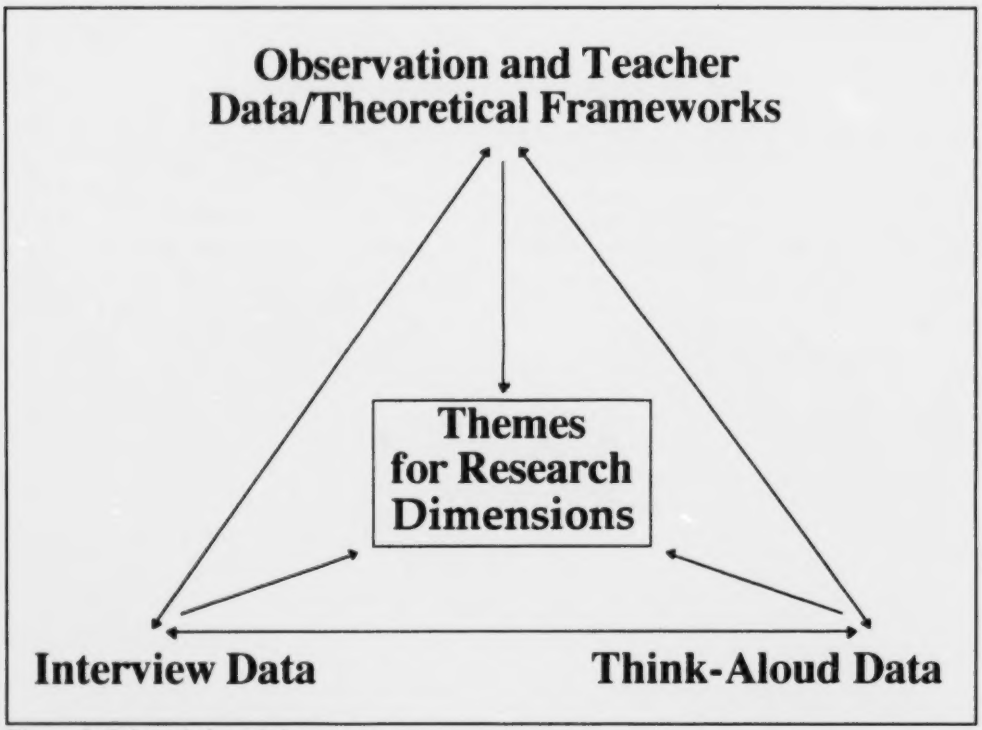

Figure 1. Triangulation of data sources.

authors did or did not identify source materials to build their accounts, while the other described the same process without the using the term), our interpretations of the data along each dimension and the themes we produced were in agreement. Therefore, we did not conduct an interrater reliability test. We, however, did work out our differences in terminology by agreement. From our analysis of this interview data, six themes emerged, one theme for each of the research Dimensions 1 and 2 and four for Dimension 3.

Following the think-aloud protocol, the tapes were transcribed for analysis and again edited sparingly for punctuation and readability. In analyzing this think-aloud data, we followed a similar procedure of holistically exploring each student's responses to the two texts. We used the themes we had identified in the content-based interview protocols and attempted to see if the patterns that surfaced there were traceable to the think-aloud transcripts as a form of data triangulation. Again, with several differences in descriptive language, we agreed on the results. Figure 1 provides a graphic depiction of how the different sources of data were triangulated to inform the themes that emerged.

The motivation questions on the final student interview protocol were largely amenable to yes or no responses with rationalizations added. They were analyzed as a method for providing general profile information about the reading interests and motivations of the 6 primary student informants in the study. We also analyzed the responses of the questionnaire Duckworth completed in the same fashion and for the same purpose.

In the next section, we use field note, teacher-questionnaire, and interest/motivation student interview data to profile Duckworth and the 6 students who participated in the study as primary informants. The purpose is to provide additional background context to the study, since the emergent themes depend largely on this specific context. In the section that follows this, we lay out the six themes by research dimension.

Participants

The Teacher

Jordan Duckworth was in his fifth year as a teacher. This was his third year in this school district, marking the point where his teaching probation ended and, if successful, he attained tenure. He was a graduate of an experimental, one-year, graduate-level teacher education program located at a large east-coast university. Before becoming certified to teach elementary school and obtaining a master's degree in education through this program, Duckworth had completed an undergraduate liberal arts degree and then worked for a number of years in the trucking industry. Eventually disaffected with this line of work, he enrolled in the 1-year experimental program. By the time of the study, Duckworth, although still early in his teaching career, was in his 30s.

Duckworth viewed history as a subject matter that unified many disciplines and provided a larger perspective on the world. For his fifth graders, he believed, history was important in helping them to develop a sense of who they were and attain a level of what he called "self-realization." He wanted his students to understand the underlying forces that helped shape their collective present identities and their place within and as a result of those forces. Implicit in this view was a characterization of history present in texts and cultural artifacts as a reliable and objectively valid accounting of past events. He wanted this communicated to his students. Yet, because he was quite knowledgeable, keenly interested in history, and an avid consumer of historical writings, he conveyed in his personal conversations with us a degree of skepticism concerning the role historians played in constructing texts free from their personal perspectives and bias. However, he seldom communicated this to his students.

Rather, through his structure of the American history course, his assignments, and his general silence in sharing his skepticism of historical texts, he more often conveyed a view of history that sent messages to his students that they could trust what they found in the books they used. For example, most of the tasks he asked students to engage in required the collection of information derived from various books available in the classrooms. Embedded in this approach was the idea that

texts contained archival and unquestionably accurate depictions of the past. Not coincidentally, this view also was supported by the district history-social studies curriculum guide for fifth grade. Concepts and issues, such as where historians get their information, how they decide what is important to include, how their perspective or bias affects what they write, and how they deal with the absence of reliable data were not discussed in class during our presence there. When we asked him to explain how he thought his students should deal with conflicts in the texts when they encountered them, he said,

> I think [that] they [students] need to understand that writers are often economizing on space or simplifying matters for readers. The two kinds of contradictions I see are: (1) greater or lesser detail, and (2) simplification to the point of telling untruth. The first is a necessary evil that can be overcome by using multiple sources. The second is pernicious—I see it as having disrespect on the part of writer for the reader.

He goes on to note the need to be a critical reader to detect the differences, but did not connect this to teaching strategies he used or could use with his fifth graders.

Later in the questionnaire, Duckworth was asked to comment on why he thought the books assigned to his fifth graders so seldom contained references to where information and evidence were obtained. He responded,

> I think that if an adult didn't ask, most fifth graders wouldn't think about it. Attribution to sources is not something that will arise in kids until they have extensive enough background knowledge to question contradictions which are based on point of view. I think that for many people this does not occur until college or graduate school, if at all.

Here, he sidesteps the issue of the possible role even elementary teachers might have in helping students to become more engaged, critical history readers. He also invokes a common belief held by some elementary school teachers that such referencing and sourcing matters generally are beyond the abilities of elementary school students to understand and detect.

Duckworth did say that he spent a brief amount of time dealing with some of these issues in a unit at the beginning of the year as a prologue to historical study. Much of what was discussed then was couched in non-subject-specific language arts and reading-skill approaches (e.g., being strategic searchers for "good" information, making sure to check for bias, reading carefully and rereading if comprehension broke down).

Believing that his students lacked content understanding and knew few facts about the past, he saw his job as providing avenues for students to boost their knowledge. Yet, he also was interested in helping his students become independent learners, skillful at collecting and sifting information about the past and drawing supportable conclusions. That is how he rationalized his "research strategy" approach. The tension between teaching reading and research strategies for the purpose of simply obtaining information, and then also pursuing those approaches that focused on assisting students to become more critical, engaged readers of history and assessors of historical evidence,

played its way through the questionnaire data and in many of our informal conversations with Duckworth.

Duckworth enjoyed watching his students read the variety of books he made available. He thought they were important improvements over the traditional textbooks. His particular favorites were the ten-part series *The History of US* (Hakim, 1993) and the various historical fiction accounts written by Jean Fritz. When asked about the validity of these alternative accounts, Duckworth noted that they were "better for research, which is how I want my students to spend much of their time." Here, he again appears to avoid the complex issues of reliability and validity of evidence, the construction of event models, and the nature of sourcing accounts and reading for subtext that historians (and his students) confront when doing their research work. His more straightforward approach to research—collecting uncontested information from a variety of sources in order to re-present it in class—came to drive much of how the students made sense of their research tasks.

The Students

The 6 fifth-graders were Saul (Asian American), Ben, and Ardy (both Caucasian), and Leah (African American), Lexus, and Attie (both Caucasian).

Saul was a talkative interviewee. When he was unsure of a response to a question that asked for specific information learned in a unit, he often would construct answers that pieced together information from various things he had heard or read, but frequently without much accuracy. His favorite subjects were science and math. He said he talked to his friends very little about what he read in history and only liked challenging history books if they were "really exciting." He did not think he was very good at reading history texts. However, this seldom bothered him, he said, because he did not feel history was a very important subject. He thought that the alternative texts and historical fiction accounts were his preference, primarily because they were "easier to read." Saul's reading level was slightly below grade.

Ben seemed a rather reticent informant at first. However, after one interview, he opened up considerably. This resulted in a variety of compelling responses to interview questions and a skillful, sophisticated analysis of the two Boston Massacre accounts. This was not surprising since Ben had the highest reading level of any of the interviewees (nearly three grades above level). He said that he talked with friends about his reading of history when he found in it something "funny or interesting." He conveyed that he was a confident reader of history books because, he said, "I usually get the point." He liked the challenge of different opinions in historical accounts. Ben noted that he found history interesting because "no one really knows what actually happened," an intriguing deduction since much of what he learned in class, at least implicitly, was presented through the texts and the teacher as an objective, trustworthy account of the past.

Ardy had a quiet but alert demeanor and was cooperative and very polite in the interviews. During the think aloud, he demonstrated clear understanding of both accounts and provided cogent analyses of their differences,

despite on-grade-level reading achievement that would have predicted more difficulty with the high school text than he displayed. He said that he sometimes mentioned things he had read in history books to his parents. He thought that he was a good reader because, like Ben, he got the point of what he read. Ardy said that he liked challenging history books if he could react and say what he thought following his reading of an historical event. He suggested that he enjoyed it when authors of history texts disagreed, but worried that it could sometimes make for confusion.

Leah's reading achievement tests indicated that she was reading slightly above grade level. She was quiet in the interview setting, often remaining reticent and speaking in soft tones. Although it was sometimes difficult during the interviews to be sure what she understood because of her short, curt responses and her reluctance to explore the questions in depth, she displayed little difficulty with the high school text in the think-aloud exercise, providing several intriguing insights, and showed high reading motivations in her responses to the final protocol. For example, when asked if she liked challenging history books, Leah said, "Yes, I like to think." She indicated that she enjoyed reading history because she thought the subject was interesting. She enjoyed it when authors disagreed because, she said, "I get different views and I can decide for myself."

Lexus read slightly above grade level and had little difficulty answering the questions in the interviews. She read through the high school text in the think-aloud protocol without trouble, noting only that she was unsure of the meaning of several words. She noted that she seldom shared much of what she read in history books with others. She thought that she was a good reader of history texts but indicated that some books were much harder to read than others. She also thought that she would prefer history books that offered little in the way of challenge because, she pointed out, "I read to relax, not to learn something." Echoing a similar thought with regard to the question about her interest in history texts wherein authors disagreed, Leah added, "I don't really like that—I just want to know what happened and not think about it."

Attie was a perceptive, above-grade-level reader who was probably the most loquacious of the 6 students. Her transcripts usually were longer than her classmates' because it often took her more time to make her point. She would pause in the middle of a thought and interrogate herself as though she had considerable practice thinking aloud everyday. In reading the high school text portion during the think-aloud protocol, she stopped to ask many questions. We understood this to mean that she had developed well-honed, strategic reading habits. She knew when to pause, reflect, and then go back repair her miscues (although the latter were few). Attie said that she seldom if ever shared history reading with others, found disagreeing authors disconcerting, and challenging history texts "Okay, as long as they're not too confusing." Despite being an above-grade-level reader, she expressed little confidence in her reading ability because ". . . a lot of time I get the wrong idea—if it's boring, it just doesn't stick!"

Results

Data trends are presented as emerging themes by research dimension, and are followed with illustrative responses drawn from

the content-based interviews. The think-aloud data is incorporated with these results at relevant points to further substantiate the emergence of these themes (or indicate countervailing evidence). It should be noted that the themes are interconnected in important ways. The data-based illustrations draw from a variety of protocol questions and do not necessarily follow the order in which the questions were asked.

Dimension 1: Reading Interest and Preference

> *Theme 1.* Generally, when given the choice, these students opted to use the alternative history texts first, found them more interesting and informative, and enjoyed reading them more than their textbooks.

With the exception of Saul, who said he did not much like reading in general, all of the students consistently reported that they enjoyed working with and reading from the alternative texts more so than from the large hardcover textbook. This preference emerged most commonly when students referred to the Hakim (1993b), *History of US* series book, *Making Thirteen Colonies* (MTC). These types of preferences should not come as much surprise to those who have conducted or read reviews of social studies textbook series.

Question: Tell me about the books you read when you studied about your colony.

Attie: Well, I read *Making the Thirteen Colonies* [MTC] and there were a lot of other books that were just kinda out there. I read this one, too, the *United States, Its History and Its Neighbors* [UST]. And then we used encyclopedias, and we just used these little books that don't give you much information, but we read them anyway. Kinda like the little thin 10-page books. But they didn't help us much. This, [MTC] book, that really helped us. It was our basic information. I mean no one would really be able to understand what the Puritans were or what the Pilgrims were or why, all their differences and stuff, and why they joined, and so it wouldn't have been half as detailed and half as informative as if they had done the textbook instead of [MTC].

Question: Which of the books you used was the most fun to read? Why?

Lexus: The one on the colonies [MTC].

I: So the stuff in your textbook, was that as interesting and fun to read or not?

Lexus: No, it wasn't as interesting.

Ben: Definitely this one [pointing to MTC]. It was the most interesting to me. It makes like a story out of history, not just telling it. This [MTC] seemed to have more information and this [textbook] has like maybe a page or two article, but it's not as interesting. This [MTC] presents a better format, maybe. Textbooks have paragraphs, no, I mean like chapters, and this [MTC] did

have chapters, but it would have sections and parts and I really liked that.

Students showed fairly sharp preferences for the stylistic features of the alternative texts that were written in ways similar to *Making Thirteen Colonies*. Their preferences appeared to hinge on the distinction between "just telling blandly" (as they thought textbooks did) and "entertaining while telling." However, what the authors of the books were telling received less careful scrutiny by the students than how they were telling it (except to the extent that one book contained more details than another, a point discussed below). Part of the reason for this was that they were not asked to question what the books contained, where the authors found their information, and whether or not the authors took care to report "the story" with some concern for the available evidence. Students simply were sent into the historical woods on a hunt for information, with few perceivable tools for judging the quality of information they found.

Given that students typically did not distinguish among the books they read except along lines of their stylistic differences (and with respect to the quantity of information they contained), we expected to find content-form conflations. However, in interviewing them about content-form differences (Dimension 2), few conflations were present in the self-reports of the 6 students. Nonetheless, students offered no mechanisms for distinguishing and evaluating the content of the different books relative to their stylistic form (e.g., expository versus fictional).

Dimension 2: Distinguishing Different Types of History Texts

> *Theme 2.* Despite the differences in content and form between the textbooks and some of the alternative texts and even among the different alternative texts, and despite showing clear preferences for one type over the other, students did not note how these differences might affect how the content of the books might need to be read and assessed in different ways.

Even though differences among and between the books frequently were raised across the content-based interviews, students did not volunteer much about being careful to assess these differences or understand their different subtexts or bias potential when reading them.

Question: Do you think you need to read these books differently because they are different types?

Lexus: No.

I: To look for different kinds of things in the different kinds of books?

Lexus: I think you just read them all the same.

Ben: No, not really. This [MTC] is like a lot shorter, that would be easier to read. You couldn't read a textbook like straight through.

Saul: No, I don't think so because . . . if you read all of them different ways then you might not know what information is better.

For the 6 students, the responses were unequivocal: read the books the same way, no

need to read them differently. In fact, Saul thought that approaching the books differently might imbalance the information criterion he relied upon to rationalize his response. Several students focused on ease of reading or on generic reading strategies (e.g., scanning, rereading) they had learned in language arts as "methods" of reading differently. These students did not interpret the question to mean raising—as possible text-shaping features—issues of author's point of view, bias, presence of opinion, or the possibility of dramatic style achieved at the expense of historical accuracy (as in historical fiction). It is conceivable that students thought the question was asking them to invoke applications of the generic reading strategies learned in language arts. However, after much talk about the differences among the texts in the interview settings, including how interesting the books were to read (form), the information they contained (content), and the possible presence of bias, opinion, and author purpose affecting historical accuracy, students were virtually silent about taking care to note these differences and assess the books accordingly.

Again, such responses may be an understandable artifact of being asked to search for information in books they were provided by a teacher they trusted—to trust the teacher was to trust the books. Students had learned about different sources historians employed, but not about how to evaluate their use in historical texts nor how to sift them to build event models, both complex exercises. Rather, their task was more straightforward: retrieve information contained in the text accounts and reproduce it for classmates. Throughout the course of our classroom observations, at no point did we notice that students were asked explicitly to make evaluations about the quality of information the books contained. The message appeared to be that the texts available were all good sources. In turn, it was this message that seemed to hold the most currency for students in the context of their research. The implications of that message also were the focus of many of the research questions asked and think-aloud protocol conducted in connection with Dimension 3.

Dimension 3: Developing Critical Reading Expertise

The exploration of this dimension's research issues with students produced four interrelated themes, dealing with text accuracy or validity; text sourcing; criteria for assessing text value; and point of view and event modeling. Like Dimension 2, the first three of these themes appear as understandable artifacts of a classroom practice that asked students to search for information on a given historical topic and present the results to the class without systematically questioning those sources or carefully assessing their contents. However, the fourth theme does provide important evidence that some of these fifth graders were beginning to develop critical reading expertise as a result of their exposure to multiple sources.

> *Theme 3.1.* In-class encounters with various historical texts by themselves did not elicit many questions or concerns for students about text differences and how they may influence the ways in which reliability and validity issues are discussed or resolved.

Reading about the same events from multiple sources creates the possibility of generating some dissonance about reliable and valid sources of information because accounts can contain disparate information. Historians must deal with this "problem" all the time in their research endeavors. For this reason, they build event models to test and corroborate evidence from different historical sources (much the way voters comparison shop candidates). In both the interview and think-aloud settings, we attempted to explore what students did and would do under similar circumstances by asking them to identify text differences and then judge their relative historical accuracy.

Questions: These books here (point to the textbook), *we usually call textbooks. These books here* (point to an alternative text), *we don't usually think of as textbooks. Are there differences between these books? Followup: Do you think one type may be more accurate than the others?*

Lexus: Well, they are pretty much the same. Except not this big one [UST], but the other ones are more like a story and they seem like their really for younger kids; they're easier to understand. When they did the big textbook, maybe they were just trying to put the information down.

I: Which of these books do you think is the most accurate?

Lexus: I think this one [points to MTC], because it looks newer, and this one [UST] has probably been around longer.

Leah: They are pretty much the same except the textbook has more details.

I: Why do the textbooks have more details?

Leah: Because most of the people used those books. It makes it sorta harder to read because you got a little bit confused some times.

I: Of all those books that you looked at, which do you think was the most accurate?

Leah: Probably the textbook, because, as I said before, it has lots of details.

For Lexus and Leah, distinctions among the texts were minor, but the differences influenced their judgments about accuracy. Lexus thought that age improved accuracy as though she was using the test of time as a criterion. Since the textbook was older by her lights, she choose it for accuracy. Leah relied on the number of details contained between the covers as the final arbiter, opting as Lexus did to give the textbook the accuracy nod because of its greater fact-compendium status.

In judging accuracy, Attie moved in the opposite direction, choosing *Making Thirteen Colonies* because of its short, topical focus. First she hedged, then challenged the textbook's massive collection of details as possible "filler" before registering her accuracy choice.

Attie: I can't really say because I don't really know enough about where they get their information from. But the big textbook may be more accurate, because it has so many more details and it might be . . . well, but some of the stuff might just be like filler. I mean they wouldn't necessarily lie

> because then it would be a horrible book. But, I mean, I bet that this [MTC] one's probably more truthful because it's so short and on one topic only.

Ardy provided an intriguing response, one that contained its virtue in its unwillingness to be definitive. In response to the question concerning accuracy, he noted, "I can't be sure because I don't know the real stuff. They just have information that seemed correct to them and put it in and it wasn't so far fetched." Much the way a historian recognizes that the past's "real" events are lost to the passing of time and that all s/he has left are historical traces and representations of that past from which to work, Ardy notes that he cannot adequately judge accuracy because he lacks access to the "real stuff," actual past events. Although his response may be rather understated and perhaps somewhat naive, his uncertainty in the face of the question may demonstrate the seeds to an astute understanding, one held by expert historian readers.

Skillful, expert readers (especially those historians studied by Wineburg, 1991, 1994) often are aware that getting at meaning in historical traces is a difficult endeavor (e.g., assessing an account's accuracy). Judgments about an historical text's validity involve a complicated interaction between the reader and what the text is written to represent. Readers have virtually no access to an untextually mediated past (Ardy's "real stuff") from which to anchor meaning. They must rely, as Ardy implies, on historians and authors writing about history to use skillful judgment and varieties of evidence to construct a representation of the past. Knowing about an author and the available sources which an author can choose, coupled with a careful reading of what the text reports based on those sources, provides the thin surface upon which to measure the text against the accuracy criterion. To say that Ardy understands all this is a large leap, but to say that the ingredients for such an understanding are there in his language (and by extension in his head) seem reasonably safe.

The think-aloud protocol with its two different versions of the Boston Massacre was designed to deliberately push against these questions of accuracy, validity, and reliability. The results tended to parallel the responses obtained in the content-based interviews.

Seldom did the 6 students make any spontaneous distinctions between the two Boston Massacre texts during the actual think-aloud protocol other than to note that the second version was longer than the first. None raised questions about why the authors of the second text (T2) had chosen to add eyewitness accounts while the first account (T1) left them out. None of the students noted the 3-day, escalating nature of the event depicted in the second account. Students had to be asked directly following the exercise about the differences between the texts, about questions of accuracy, validity, and the nature of evidence use (e.g., eyewitnesses). In several cases however, once asked, students did offer assessments, some of which were quite astute for fifth graders with little experience dealing with these concepts and issues.

Even when asked following the think-aloud exercise, Lexus offered little to suggest that she noticed what the eyewitness contribu-

tions added (or subtracted) to the overall account or what effect they may have on a history text's validity or reliability. Saul thought that all the details in T2 were unnecessary, causing him to prefer the simplicity of overview contained in T1. He had no questions about sources for T1's dialogue or the reliability of the eyewitness accounts other than to dismiss them because they were too short in length to be trustworthy. On the other hand, Leah judged T2 to be more believable because it contained the eyewitness testimony. She also suggested that the soldiers were given better treatment in T1. Although finding the actual reading of T2 difficult, Attie concluded afterwards that T2 helped her establish the larger context in which the Boston Massacre took place. She also indicated after reading both accounts that the point of view of the author was crucial to how the combatants appeared to the reader. Ardy judged T2 to be preferable because of the detail it added, but did say that both accounts were believable. He did not ask any questions about why one author chose to include eyewitness testimony while the other left it out. Ben was the only student to comment at several places throughout the actual think-aloud portion about the texts themselves and questions of validity. *Ben reading T1*:There is some confusion about what happened next.

Ben: So this is like from here on out I think it's going to be an opinion, because there is some confusion. I think there are going to be two different accounts on this. Probably one on the next page.

In judging the two texts, Ben also appeared occasionally to draw on his prior knowledge and read for subtextual features during the think-aloud exercise. This excerpt follows the reading of the last sentence of T1.

Ben: I also heard that like the colonists—I think it was in Boston—they wanted to get the colonists really mad at the British for this because they like . . . some people wanted to break away and others were like in between, and they made like a huge incident and like drew that picture that is famous. It's on the cover of one of the books [*From Colonies to Country* volume he was reading from]. And then they sort of made it look like they are all firing and like they didn't do it by accident. Well, not really by accident. Like they planned it and stuff. That is what really got them mad.

Although students offered understandably little spontaneous commentary on the relationship of these different texts to concepts such as accuracy, validity, and reliability (with the exception of Ben) because they were not accustomed to doing so, when pressed, they were able to engage the texts with some interesting initial assessments. These assessments imply that even these young students appear to possess an emerging understanding of the concepts.

Theme 3.2. Authors of the texts students read did not record where they had obtained the information they used to construct their historical accounts, thus inhibiting students' ability to "source" accounts and make careful judgments about reliability and valid evidence-use.

The fifth graders had learned in class early in the year that historians often obtained the information they used to construct their historical accounts from diaries, journals, physical artifacts, and other texts (secondary sources). They tended to rely on these types of responses to questions about evidence sources. When we attempted to push them to delve more deeply into authors' source selections they became unsure of their answers.

Question: Where do you think the authors of those books got their information? Do the authors say where their information comes from?

Lexus: They might find old letters that he might have written like a diary or maybe they might have found different things that may have been used in the colony that had some information. If they wanted to know what kind of clothes that they wore, they might find pieces of clothing and so they could show you what kind of clothes they wore.

I: Say one book used a diary and another book used some other kind of source, why do you think that the authors choose to use different sources of information?

Lexus: Well, maybe someone thought the diary would give more information or maybe that's all they could find or they had more stuff in the diary so they decided to get more information from that. Why don't we use that?

I: Did the authors in the books that you used say where they got their information?

Lexus: Not that I read.

Ardy: Artifacts like pieces of paper, diaries, pots, and stories that were passed down from generation to generation.

I: Have you ever personally seen any of those type of things before?

Ardy: No, not that I can remember.

I: Do you remember anywhere in the books mentioning where they got information from?

Ardy: I don't think so. They may have gotten some from pottery. I think it would just be found out from artifacts or something, but I don't know.

All 6 students reiterated possible sources such as diaries, journals, oral histories, and the like, based on what they had learned earlier in the year. All 6 also were sure that they had not seen any references to the sources the texts' authors had used in constructing their accounts. Without sources, students were prevented from questioning the texts and cross checking one against another for their accuracy or validity on "sourcing" grounds. When asked why the texts contained no source citations, a few interesting responses emerged. One of the more unusual was Saul's: "Well, maybe it's like some kind of greediness. They don't want to tell where they could have gotten their information 'cause maybe somebody might go to the exact same place and copyright their book."

During the think-aloud protocol, students had a chance to compare an account that contained no references of any kind to sources

(T1) and an account that made reference to and quoted from several eyewitness accounts without identifying them specifically (T2).[7] Having eyewitness accounts present in T2 alerted students to primary source material. This in turn allowed them (in response to our questions following the exercise) to draw several conclusions about the two versions, make distinctions between the texts, and in Leah's case, judge the texts' relative validity.

I: Do the authors ever identify where they get their information...?

Lexus: The longer one [T2] says, "an eyewitness recalled," so they might have maybe written it down somewhere, and if they found like a diary or something then they would have known what the person said, and then that way they could of, that might be where they got information for the longer one.

I: What about in the shorter one [T1]?

Lexus: Not quite sure because they didn't have an eyewitness.

Leah: This one [T2] says they got it from eyewitnesses, and this one doesn't say.

I: What do you think about it when you read that this is an eyewitness account?

Leah: Well, it is probably true. You don't know if it is true or not if there isn't an eyewitness. But I'm not really sure.

Despite being able to make some judgments about the two texts' validity, both Lexus and Leah still were unsure about what to do with the eyewitness testimony. In situations such as this, historians use the two accounts to build and work from event models. The eyewitness sources figure into the development of these models and are assessed against other sources in an effort to establish a plausible understanding of the event in question. Neither Lexus nor Leah (nor the other students) had much experience working with event models, and so were left with a measure of uncertainty about how to deal with different descriptions of the same event. However, the fact that they were evaluating one account in light of the other demonstrates that they were able to begin the process of creating event models by reading different sources with a critical eye.

> *Theme 3.3.* Reflecting the nature of the research tasks, students frequently invoked an information-quantity criterion as a key measure for distinguishing the value of the different books and accounts they drew from.

Even though in doing their research tasks students could not judge a text by checking an author's sources and had little experience with event modeling, they were not without criteria for evaluating the worth of the accounts. Reflecting their in-class, information-gathering

[7] They were footnoted, however, in the actual history text. Under constraints for the time we were allotted to conduct the think-aloud protocol, we chose to remove that actual references on the sheet of paper we gave the students to read from, but we kept the actual text book present if students were cued to ask about them from phrases in the text that referred to eyewitness accounts. Students typically noted the eyewitness versions as important and several judged them to derive from personal journals, diaries, or quotes in newspaper accounts, but did not ask for more specific information about them.

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activities, students developed other criteria, the most notable of which was the quantity of information a text contained. The more the better since that meant having to consult fewer books in the long run; at least that was the general practice observed in class.

Question: Did all the books have the same material? If not, why not? If so, why do you think that was?

Lexus: It was slightly different; but like in the one, in the textbook had the same information that was in the series [MTC]. But the one in the series had more.

I: And what about that third book that you mentioned you used?

Lexus: Well, it didn't have as much information, but it was different. It just had if there was just the different events that happened. They had like, I think, different ones.

Question: Do you think it is important to use more than one book when studying a colony? Why or why not?

Lexus: Yeah. Because if it does have different information you would probably want the most information you can get. So if you use more than one book it's possible it has different information and you get more.

Attie: Yeah. Because if I only read one book then I would not have had a lot, and then if I read other books, then I can put it all together and I just would have even more.

Leah: Yes. One book might not have everything.

I: The goal was to get as much information as you could?

Leah: Yeah.

Students also invoked the information-quantity criteria following the actual think-aloud protocol. Ardy used it most explicitly.

I: Does reading both accounts help your understanding or does it make it more confusing?

Ardy: I think they [T1 and T2] are basically the same. This one [T2] may have been a little bit better. The eyewitness account was kind of confusing when it said about Crispus Attucks, and he struck the grenadier's gun. I don't even know if that was the captain's gun or if it was another soldiers' gun. But I think it helps because it tells where you got a lot of the detail. . . . If I was doing a report on the Boston Massacre, I think it would be better to have this account, this second one.

Generally unaware of strategies to resolve differences if they found historical accounts that contained varied or discrepant information and unable to consult the sources an author used, students concluded that books were valid (or not so) based on the amount of topic information (details, facts, events, names) they contained. As a result, when they were asked to make judgments about the different texts used in class and the two versions of the Boston Massacre, deference to the information-

quantity criterion was the most common and consistent response to arise among the students. These types of responses and the commonness of their occurrence underscore the importance of the established purpose for reading in the classroom setting. These fifth graders appeared to be very pragmatic readers. Since the texts they used were conveyed as sources of uncontested knowledge about the past, they simply could be mined for the information they contained. The teacher made the texts available and explained the information-gathering task. As we have alluded, the extent to which the students trusted their teacher became the extent to which they in turn trusted the task purpose and the role the texts played in addressing that purpose. Collecting information from the multiple accounts available turned out to be, in students' minds, the singular purpose for reading. The power of this arrangement seemed deeply instilled in what students thought of as studying and learning American history.

However, there was evidence that some students were interrogating the multiple texts they read (checking subtext and author bias) and building and working from implicit event models. This evidence suggested that several students were on the cusp of learning to read critically, in ways similar to how historians confront texts and conduct research. These results were encouraging and provide several countervailing examples to those discussed in the three previous themes. This evidence is considered in Theme 3.4.

> *Theme 3.4.* Despite relying heavily on the information-quantity criterion, emerging from the use of a variety of text sources were indications that students (a) found author's point of view important in making judgments about a source's reliability and (b) could think in terms of event modeling while also considering historical context.

Although students frequently judged the texts by the information-quantity criterion alone, there were indications that they had an emergent understanding of authors' frames of reference and texts' differing points of view. Attie and Ben particularly were able to discuss what effect this may have had on authors' (or students') selection of information and speculate that it was a reason for finding discrepant accounts. However, none of the students directly connected authors' beliefs and commitments and resulting source selections to criteria for judging the quality of the information contained in the texts, with the possible exceptions of Ben and Ardy who appeared to be working from implicit event models.

Question: Do you think it is important to use more than one book when studying a colony? Why or why not?

Attie: Yes. Because the people who wrote the books don't agree and a lot of the books are . . . some of the things they write are opinions. . . . some people they just don't have that information. They don't really think that information is true, so they don't write it or, I mean, they just think that other people can't prove that the information is true, so they won't

write it. Sometimes people just disagree.

Ben: Yeah. So you can see two points of view like one person might not think the same thing as someone else.

I: And how is it you decide what you will report?

Ben: Well, usually you have to form your own opinion of what you thought happened or like what makes more sense. You may say that I am not sure if this is true, but my opinion is that [this] is what happened.

Ardy: Sometimes so you can compare information. Then you could hear both sides so you can choose which seems the most likely. . . .

I: How did you decide what information you were going to use?

Ardy: What was most likely because if they said something that seemed far out and never have happened in that time you wouldn't really use that information.

Attie, Ben, and Ardy show considerable sensitivity here to the influence of author's point of view on how historical accounts are constructed. Attie observes that some of the text material they encounter could be unsubstantiated opinion, not supported by evidence, raising at least implicit questions about a text's reliability. This may reflect transfer from language arts where students learned about the author's point of view and how it influenced the nature and structure of the literature they read.

Both Ben and Ardy thought that multiple accounts might assist them in the formation of their views about what happened in the past. Both their responses show implicit signs of event modeling. For example, Ben noted, ". . . you have to form your own opinion of what you thought happened, or like what makes more sense," and Ardy suggested, "Then you can hear both sides, so you can choose which seems more likely." These two excerpts demonstrate quite clearly the process historians use to engage multiple sources and judge validity and reliability issues. In Ardy's response, there also is evidence that he is thinking about the historical context in which an event model can be placed. Taken together, these students' responses indicate the presence of a sophisticated set of understandings and thought processes used heavily by expert historians. More such evidence surfaced during and following the think-aloud exercise.

Point of view also was a deliberately central feature of the think-aloud protocol. We asked students about it specifically if they did not raise it spontaneously during or following the reading of the texts. Ben was quick to point out during his reading of T2 that the eyewitness accounts were opinions and needed to be read carefully. After he finished reading the two accounts, he rationalized the importance of point of view and considering eyewitness accounts this way:

I: Do you think it's better if you have eyewitness accounts [as in T2] or would you prefer someone just summarize it like this [in T1]?

Ben: Well. I think having both would be good because then you could see different points of view.

I: Why is point of view important?

Ben: The British were thinking, like they are taunting them, and then it was just a mistake that they shot. And the colonists thought that they planned it, and [there you have] two completely different opinions on one thing that is the same. So that [eyewitness accounts in T2] sort of helps because it sounded like it came from two different people rather from just the colonists saying that, so they like put their opinions together to make one event [pointing to T1].

Following the think-aloud exercise, both Attie and Ardy reinforced their understanding of how point of view influences how a text might be read.

I: Do you think that after reading this [T2] passage, your feelings about the British soldiers and the Boston people changed, or did they stay the same?

Attie: Yeah, they changed. Because they are talking like worse about the soldiers. . . . At least they are talking about, if not in detail, they can't really say what happened with the rope makers and stuff. And what happened with the stout man. . . . And, I mean it kind of makes the colonists look a lot worse than it did in this [T1] part. It made them [the soldiers] look bad, but really they weren't.

I: Are you saying that you might get a different view of history depending on which version you read?

Attie: Yeah. I knew that it was all started because people didn't want the British soldiers in the colonies. And then I kind of knew about the job thing, but if someone asked me about it, I wouldn't really know unless I had read this [T2]. And I just learned that they were all like fighting, and then they weren't using guns or anything. They weren't killing each other, but then I read that people started yelling "fire, fire" and then a guy swung and he hit him, and then I learned about the shot into the crowd, and then I learned how everyone—both sides—started to really get crazy.

Ardy: I think this one [T2] is kind of slanted towards the British more or less, and this one [T1] is kind of towards both of them. It [T1] is trying to be in the middle.

I: This second witness [in T2] said that the people seem to be leaving, going away from the British. Do you think this shows a bias towards either side?

Ardy: I would say they are sort of leaning towards . . . they talk more about what happened with the British soldiers, but they seem to say that the British soldiers wouldn't have had it happen if it weren't for the citizens of Boston.

The emerging understanding of the importance of author's point of view and, in Attie's and Ardy's cases, the subject of opinions and bias in historical accounts is an important sign. It suggests that, at least for these "good" readers (but yet novices when it comes to historical texts), young students are able to understand these abstract concepts and make

sense of how they influence writing and what one reads, if they are asked within the context of activities that push them to do so. But the understandings need to be explicitly connected to the reading of history and to questions of judgment criteria, evidence use, and event modeling if young students are to move toward critical literacy and enhanced levels of historical understanding. Unfortunately, the overall evidence for these direct connections in this class were limited, in spite of the potential for the questions to arise around the multiple sources employed. Students were too busy collecting information that was portrayed as uncontested and trustworthy.

Discussion

Does a classroom environment that encourages the use of multiple history text sources to inquire about the past generate interest in studying history and reading historical texts while also promoting high levels of critical literacy and historical understanding? The evidence from this study suggests that students enjoyed the alternative texts and, if they could, gravitated to them during the conduct of their research projects. In this way, the presence of an array of texts, coupled with the fact that students were sent to dig about for information and thereby had some control over their own learning while accomplishing their tasks in socially interactive contexts, increased their engagement in reading history. There also was little direct evidence of the content-form entanglements noted in the previous study (VanSledright & Brophy, 1992). But, on the other hand, the task of searching historical accounts for information, without having well-developed tools to evaluate the quality of that information, probably did very little to enhance critical literacy and historical understanding, and may have inadvertently supported and/or fostered content-form fusions for some students in this class.

Encouraging, however, were the appearance of signs that some fifth-grade readers have interest in and the skill necessary to acquire the sorts of reading capabilities possessed by expert readers in the discipline of history. But several factors tended to inhibit broader applications of these skills to increase levels of historical understanding and critical reading practice.

First, students were encouraged to utilize an information-quantity criterion in the searches. Structuring the learning activities as straight forward information-retrieval tasks subtly cultivates uncritical acceptance of whatever information the various texts contain. Levels of critical reading practice in the history domain that require event modeling, reading for subtext and point of view, and studying evidence use have little room to flower in such a context.

Second, authors of the books students read did not report where the information they culled together to write their historical accounts came from (except for required picture and graphics citations). Without access to these sources, students were unable to learn how historians draw from traces of the past to piece together their accounts, a vital element of historical understanding. Students were deprived the opportunity to learn about and to weigh the validity and reliability of those

sources. The absence of source citation added further encouragement for students to passively accept the accounts as truth. Without the source citations, judging the validjty of the accounts and learning to read them critically for the subtexts they contained were significantly constrained.

And finally, present in the context of the classroom and in the nature of the search assignments was a view of history at odds with expanded levels of historical understanding. Advanced levels of understanding presuppose that access to history occurs principally through accounts constructed by humans—often historians, unless primary sources are used heavily. In the classroom, they most frequently are written accounts. Those written by historians contain varieties of presumably rigorously researched evidence and sources, but how this evidence was collected and arranged and to what conclusion reflects as much the commitment, point of view, and frame of reference of the author as it does the evidence itself. To be a good reader of history (and by extension, a careful consumer of text-driven information in an "information society") would require knowledge of sources, the author's commitments, and the context within which the author had written. To be a good reader would involve interrogating the texts and their authors, a refusal to accept a text at face value, and a skeptical stance (Beck, et al., 1995; McKeown & Beck, 1994; Wineburg, 1991, 1994).

By contrast, the view that appeared to be at work in this classroom (and perhaps common to history classrooms across the U.S.; see Greene, 1994; VanSledright, 1995) involved understanding history as a fact compendium. That is, history was perceived and taught in this classroom as a record of reified facts—events, details, dates, names—strung together in history books of whatever type by expository or narrative prose. As a result, students were given the task of going to these archival sources and collecting uncontested facts to be re-represented to others in class. Students generally derived the idea that what was in those books mirrored what actually happened in the past (the "real stuff"). Understanding history and engagement with sources and authors were displaced by the primacy of locating facts. It is hardly surprising then that the student informants thought the various books were all more or less interesting fact repositories—on the order of encyclopedias or historical annals—to be read and understood in much the same way.

Creating research opportunities for students and offering them a variety of different texts to consult during their inquiries are important steps in the direction of enhancing critical reading engagement and amplifying historical understanding. However, we would suggest two interrelated ways in which teaching and learning history in elementary classrooms could be reconfigured to offset the factors that inhibit the full potential of this research-oriented approach. First, teachers might deliberately borrow—as paradigmatic—the strategies and practices historian readers use in their historical work (see Wineburg, 1991, 1994). This would entail (1) teaching students how to draw from multiple sources (and their own prior knowledge) to construct event models of those historical topics they are asked to investigate; (2) raising and discussing

in class issues of valid and reliable evidence use, the role of subtext and bias in addressing conflicting sources, and the importance of placing event models in historical context; and (3) enabling students to *begin* the practice of "sourcing" texts and accounts by choosing to use those that contain references and/or requesting that publishers and authors include references in future text editions if their current editions fail to contain them. The regular use of exercises such as the comparison of two different accounts of the Boston Massacre could serve all three of these purposes.

And second, there needs to be a shift in the view of history being promoted in the classroom. This would involve dropping the idea that history can be understood as an objective, fact-based, consensus account of the past, and turning to view history as a set of representations of the past authored by human beings (historians) who are telling stories employing different frameworks, making different assumptions, and relaying varying subtexts. This would help to demystify history, bring students closer to the fellow human beings that write historical accounts, and make possible the fruitful deployment of the strategies noted above. This shift in view offers an important complement to the research and reading expertise engaged in by historians, that which even young students would benefit by beginning to emulate.

Conclusion

The presence in some of these students of an emerging understanding that authors' accounts reflect bias, opinion, and various points of view and implicit event modeling at work, suggests that, by fifth grade already, they are capable of interrogating history texts, sourcing accounts, weighing evidence, judging validity, and learning to read for bias and subtext. Several elements of advanced historical understanding appear to be within reach. But to reach them (and here we again assume that this is a worthwhile goal for the citizenship reasons described earlier) will require more than experience with multiple sources and the search for historical information, although this is a hopeful first step. It will necessitate teaching a different view of history and cultivating perspectives on reading historical accounts that encourage students to employ reading strategies such as building event models to help in judging a source's validity and reliability, assessing point of view, exploring possible subtexts, and looking for bias as they read those accounts (on this point, see also Levstik, 1992). Without these measures, students will most likely continue to find alternative texts more stylistically interesting, but will not necessarily develop into more engaged readers of history, attain critical literacy, or move to more expert levels of historical understanding. Nor will they be able to train the critical reading habits they could learn in history class on assessing and judging advertisements, political pitches, and policy arguments so prevalent in our text-dominated, information-oriented society.

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White, H. (1987). *The content of the form: Narrative discourse and historical representation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Wigfield, A., & Guthrie, J.T. (1995). *Dimensions of children's motivations for reading: An initial study*. (Reading Research Report No. 34). Athens, GA: NRRC, Universities of Georgia and Maryland College Park.

Wineburg, S.S. (1991). On the reading of historical texts: Notes on the breach between school and academy. *American Educational Research Journal, 28*, 495-519.

Wineburg, S.S. (1994). The cognitive representation of historical texts. In G. Leinhardt, I. Beck, & C. Stainton (Eds.), *Teaching and learning in history* (pp. 171-208). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Appendix A

Abbreviated Bibliography of Historical Text

Sample of History Texts Available to Students

Fishwich, M. (1965). *Jamestown: The first English colony (American Heritage Junior Library Series)*. New York: Harper and Row.

Fradin, D. (1990). *The Virginia colony*. Chicago: Children's Press. (A 13-volume hardcover series on each of the original English colonies in North America.)

Fritz, J. (1974). *Why don't you get a horse, Sam Adams?* New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan.

Fritz, J. (1976). *What's the big idea, Ben Franklin?* New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan.

Fritz, J. (1977). *Can't you make them behave, King George?* New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan.

Fritz, J. (1989). *The great little Madison*. New York: Scholastic.

Fritz, J. (1994). *Around the world in a hundred years: From Henry the Navigator to Magellan*. New York: Scholastic.

Grosseck, J., & Attwood, E. (1967). *Great explorers*. New York: Fideler.

Hakim, J. (1993). *A history of US*. New York: Oxford University Press. (A 10-volume paperback series.)

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. (1991). *The United States, its history and its neighbors*. Orlando, FL: Author.

Kent, D. (1993). *Benjamin Franklin: Extraordinary patriot*. New York: Scholastic.

Longfellow, H.W. (1985). *Paul Revere's ride*. Boston: Greenwillow.

McGowan, T. (1986). *George Washington*. New York: Franklin Watts.

McHenry, R. (Ed.). (1980). *Famous American women: A biographical dictionary from colonial times to the present*. New York: Dover.

Modern Curriculum Press (1994). *Voices in African American history*. Cleveland, OH: Author. (A six-volume paperback series.)

Richards, N. (1968). *The story of the Declaration of Independence*. Chicago: Children's Press.

Appendix B

Think-Aloud Protocol Texts

Text #1 (T1)

The Boston Massacre

On a freezing March day in 1770, one of the king's soldiers was looking for work to earn some extra money. Someone started making fun of him and told him to get a job cleaning toilets. . . . One thing led to another and there was a fight.

That started things. Soon a noisy, jeering group of mischief-makers gathered in front of the Boston Custom House. They began pushing and shoving and throwing stones and pieces of ice at the British sentry. He got knocked down and he called for help. Captain Thomas Preston came to the rescue with eight British soldiers.

There is some confusion about what happened next. The mob is said to have taunted the redcoats, yelling, "Fire! Fire!" Captain Preston is said to have yelled, "Hold your fire!" Then a British soldier was hit with a big stick. He claimed he heard the word "fire," so he fired his gun into the crowd. The street gang moved forward; the redcoats panicked and fired at unarmed people. Five Americans died; seven were wounded.

None of them was a hero. The victims were troublemakers who got worse than they deserved. The soldiers were professionals ... who shouldn't have panicked. The whole thing shouldn't have happened.

From *The history of US: From colonies to country* (pp. 64–65), by J. Hakim, 1993. New York: Oxford University Press.

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Text #2 (T2)

The Boston Massacre

On the third of March [1770], a British soldier approached a Negro employed in a . . . rope factory . . . and asked if they wanted to hire a man. The soldier was told that the lowliest work was assigned to "lobsterbacks," as the red-coated soldiers were sometimes called. [An eyewitness recalled:]

> This produced a conflict between the soldier and the negro, and, before relief came to his assistance, the negro was very severely beaten. Some [ropemakers] . . . came up and parted them. Mr. Gray [the foreman of the workers] told the soldier that "as he had obtained satisfaction for the insult, he had better go to his barracks." The soldier . . . said that "for a six-pence he would drub [beat] him as he had done the negro."—a contest then took place between them in which the soldier received a much worse beating than the negro, and went off to his barracks . . . swearing revenge. In about a half an hour the soldier returned with about seventy of his comrades . . . armed with pipe staves . . . and made the attack with great fury. The [ropemakers had] a decided superiority.

The soldiers returned again that afternoon, but with their numbers increased to some three hundred men. The witness to the incidents continued, "The . . . virtuous [ropemakers] . . . soon triumphed over the idle, inactive . . . though brave soldiery."

The next day, the British commander sent a protest to Lieutenant-Governor Hutchinson in which he complained that his soldiers [received] constant abuse . . . by the citizens of Boston. [The Boston city council said that] until the British troops were removed . . . the incidents between the soldiers and the [citizens] of Boston were likely to become more violent. On Monday March 5, . . . [this resulted in the Boston Massacre]. An eyewitness gave the following account . . . :

> The People seemed to be leaving the soldiers, and to turn from them when they came down . . . from Jackson's corner, . . . crying, damn them, they dare not fire, we are not afraid of them. One of these people, a stout man with a long cord wood stick, threw himself in, and made a blow at the officer; I saw the officer try to ward off the stroke; whether he struck him or not I do not know; the stout man then turned around, and struck the grenadier's gun at the captains right hand, and immediately fell it with his club, and knocked his gun away, and struck him over the head; the blow came on either the soldier's cheek or hat. The stout man . . . cried, kill the dogs, knock them over. This was the general cry; the people crowded in.

When the eyewitness was asked to identify the stout man [he said he thought it was a negro, who was later] identified as Crispus Attucks. . . . The five victims [those who died] of the Boston Massacre [were] Crispus Attucks, James Caldwell, Samuel Gray, Samuel Maverick, and Patrick Carr. . . .

From *Inquiries into American History: The American Revolution* (pp. 76–79), by D.D. Cummins and W.G. White, 1980. Encino, CA: Glencoe Publishing Co.

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